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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 000273

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SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE FM'S MEETING WITH S; HELP ON GTMO,
TROOPS FOR ISAF

REF: LISBON 254

Classified By: DEPUTY POL/ECON COUNSELOR TROY FITRELL FOR REASONS 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) Summary. Ambassador Stephenson met with Portuguese FM Luis Amado May 20 to prepare for Amado's June 4 meeting with Secretary Clinton in Washington. Amado recognized the need to use Lajes Air Field for the process of transferring detainees from Guantanamo to resettlement countries and stressed that, last week's unfortunate flight refusal notwithstanding, Lajes was open for future flights. Amado expressed his strong interest that the wage dispute regarding the USAF's Portuguese employees at Lajes be resolved by the time of his meeting with Secretary Clinton. A preliminary solution has been negotiated; Amado hopes to sign a document with Secretary Clinton to put the solution into action, should USG legal processes be worked out in time. Amado confirmed that Portugal intends to return a QRF to ISAF; most likely integrated within the British Command in Helmand Province. The GOP is waiting for the Defense Council, including President Cavaco Silva, to bless the plan. End summary.

12. (U) Ambassador Stephenson met with Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Amado May 20 to prepare for FM Amado's June 4 meeting with Secretary Clinton in Washington, discussing items likely to be on the agenda for that meeting.

Guantanamo

13. (C) Amado said the May 14 refusal to allow a U.S. Air Force aircraft to land at Lajes Air Base in the Azores after delivering an Algerian detainee to France was the recommendation of Political Director Nuno Brito, who Amado said was worried about political fallout. Amado said that he signed off on Brito's recommendation, but that he fully understood the logistical need for Lajes Air Base in the transfer of detainees necessary to close the Guantanamo detention center and promised full cooperation for future flights.

14. (C) Regarding the resettlement of detainees in Portugal, Ambassador Stephenson noted that we hoped to provide the government of Portugal (GOP) with dossiers for the detainees approved for resettlement as soon as possible.

Lajes Wage Reviews

15. (U) As noted reftel, DOD's Office of Civilian Personnel Policy (OSD-CPP) and Embassy have long searched for a

resolution to a wage increase dispute regarding the USAF's Portuguese employees at Lajes Air Field. OSD-CPP and the Embassy reached a preliminary agreement with the GOP and the Regional Government of the Azores (RGA) during the last U.S.-Portugal Bilateral Commission meeting to remove a contentious wage survey from the Labor Agreement and Work Regulations and replace it with the automatic application of the higher of Portugal's civil service wage increase and DOD's civilian employees wage increase. The draft text to revise the Labor Agreement and Work Regulations is with DOD's Office of General Counsel (OGC) for review and for completion of the Circular 175 Authority with the Department of State to make a formal agreement.

¶6. (C) Amado made clear, however, how much he wants to have this agreement as a deliverable from his meeting with Secretary Clinton. While the formal agreement almost certainly will not be concluded by June 4, Amado hopes to have a joint statement or letter that declares our intent to enact the concept. Ambassador Stephenson noted that the range of USG offices have invested extensive efforts already on this subject and that we will encourage relevant offices to move quickly.

ISAF Commitments

¶7. (C) Amado said the GOP is studying options to double Portugal's troop commitments to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, but confirmed that the likely choice is to return the company-level Quick Reaction Force (QRF) that departed Afghanistan in August

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¶2008. Ambassador Stephenson stressed to Amado that we support the integration of the Portuguese QRF within the British command in Helmand Province, should that be the final decision. Amado recognized that there was no difference between the U.S. and UK "asks" regarding ISAF.

¶8. (C) Amado noted that military deployments need to be approved by the Defense Council, a body chaired by President Cavaco Silva. While that body has not yet scheduled a date to meet, Amado said that contacts between the GOP and the President indicate that the President is increasingly inclined to support the concept. (Note: The GOP is led by Socialist Prime Minister Jose Socrates, but the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces is President Anibal Cavaco Silva, from the rival Social Democrats. Both the government and the President must agree on military deployments. End note.)

MEPP and Iran

¶9. (C) Amado suggested that achieving Middle East peace is a necessary condition to resolve most of the other problems in the world. The conflict between radical Islam and western mores, he said, cannot be addressed while the Palestinian question remains. Amado congratulated President Obama on his efforts to reach out to the Islamic world, specifically citing the inaugural address, the recent speech in Ankara, and the upcoming speech in Cairo. Amado reiterated concerns regarding Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu and the current tensions within the government of Israel.

¶10. (C) On Iran, Amado recognized that the USG had reached out to Teheran and that it is up to the Iranians now to move. Amado noted that the EU had encouraged the U.S. to take a more open stance with Iran and was gratified that the U.S. had done so. Amado said that he expected the Arab world to help the U.S. and EU encourage Russia and China to help on the question of further EU sanctions on Iran if needed.

Comment

¶11. (C) Amado has been extraordinarily helpful to the USG during his entire tenure, which made last week's flight clearance refusal all the more surprising. We take his

explanation at face value and his clear statement that Lajes Air Field is available for future flights is gratifying. Speaking of Lajes, the wage issue has been a significant irritant for several years now. It may seem trivial from the U.S. perspective, but we assure readers that it is important to the GOP and it affects every aspect of our bilateral relationship. We have reached a tentative agreement after years of negotiation, but now must get the legal process completed. We encourage our Washington colleagues to handle this process as quickly as possible. We understand that the entire process may not be complete by June 4, but we hope that we will be able to have some sort of joint statement or letter of intent on the subject as a deliverable for Secretary Clinton's meeting with Amado that day.

For more reporting from Embassy Lisbon and information about Portugal, please see our Intelink site:

<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/portal:portugal>

STEPHENSON